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SUBJECT: JERUSALEM MEDIA REACTION (10/31): BILATERAL NEGOTIATIONS:
"AN OUTDATED PARADIGM"

Main Stories:

Al Hayat Al Jadida leads and other front pages report that Secretary of State Rice will visit the region the first week of November to, "follow up on efforts to reach a framework agreement for peace between Israel and the Palestinians." All front pages report that the Middle East Quartet will meet in Cairo on November 9 to discuss the peace process. In other U.S.-related news, Al Quds' front page reports on "overwhelming international condemnation" of the recent U.S. strike on Syria and anti-American protest rallies in Damascus.

Al Quds leads with upbeat coverage about an atmosphere of optimism surrounding expectations for upcoming Palestinian talks in Cairo. Al-Ayyam's front page reports that Cairo continues to refuse changes to its proposal for Palestinian national unity, while Hamas expresses a desire to discuss the proposal further. All papers report that heads of Hamas, Islamic Jihad and Palestinian Authority (PA) President Abbas are planning to attend the opening session, noting that Abbas will participate in his capacity as PLO Chairman, not Fatah party leader. In linked reporting, Al Quds and Al Hayat Al Jadida publish a front page photo showing Fatah activists being released from a Hamas detention facility in Gaza on October 30, as a goodwill gesture ahead of the Cairo talks.

Al Quds' front page reports that the PLO Executive Committee has almost finished drafting the election law for the Palestinian National Council. Al Quds also runs an interview with Democratic Front for the Liberation of Palestine party chief Hawatmih. Hawatmih comments that discussion on, "the length of the term of the office of Palestinian Authority President should remain clear of any political maneuvers."

In Gaza news, the front pages report that Israel closed Gaza commercial crossings, following "alleged reports" of a rocket attack from Gaza on the Israeli town of Sderot. In separate reporting, all front pages note that Egyptian President Mubarak threatened to halt all efforts concerning a prisoners exchange deal between Israel and Hamas, citing the absence of an Israeli decision-maker at this time.

Finally, Al Ayyam front pages comments by UNRWA Commissioner General Karen Abu Zayid warning against the negative effects of any cut in assistance to UNRWA, adding that 90% of small businesses in Gaza went out of business last year, and unemployment has surged to 45-50%.

Al Quds front-pages a report that Israeli military arrested 15 students from the Palestine Technical College near Hebron and demolished housing barracks belonging to 250 Bedouin families near Ramallah on October 30.

On inside page, Al Quds reports on "rising Muslim and Palestinian anger" over the "Tolerance Museum" project, to be built on an Islamic graveyard in Jerusalem. The article states that the "American-Israeli" projects will cost \$200 million and is coordinated and overseen by the Governor of California. Sheikh Rayd Salah, Head of the Islamic Movement in Israel, is quoted blasting the Israeli Court's decision to allow the "destruction of Muslim tombs in order to build a museum."

Al Quds' front page highlights an increase in Israeli settler attacks on Palestinian farmers near Bethlehem. The report quotes Israeli Defense Forces legal advisor stating that the Israeli police force, not the Israeli military, should confront Israeli settlers.

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Al Quds and Al Ayyam cite an AFP wire story on their front pages when reporting that Barak Obama is leading in the polls.

BLOCK QUOTES:

1) Jawad Bashiti editorializes in Al Ayyam under the title "What is behind Abu Kamal" (10/31): "Even a child has the political awareness to understand that the strike [on Syria] was the worst possible service the [Bush] administration could have performed for the Al Maliki Government in its efforts to pass the security agreement in parliament. If the U.S. shows no hesitation in attacking Iraq's neighbors before the agreement is signed, how will it behave after signing it?... I believe that the U.S. wanted to deter Syria from contributing to Russia's growing military might."

2) Al Quds editorial "Dialogue and ending the siege" (10/31): "The suffocating siege on the Gaza Strip should compel Palestinian factions to work seriously towards ending the suffering of the one and a half million Palestinians living in a big prison [Gaza]... People are hoping that the Palestinian Authority and Arabs, particularly Egypt, will open the crossing points ... since those under siege are not all Hamas members, but also citizens."

3) Regular contributor Mohamad Yaghi opines in Al Ayyam under the title, "A bilateral end to the Israeli-Palestinian negotiations" (10/31): "[Israel's President] Peres says let's negotiate with all Arabs. [the statement is] an acknowledgment that bilateral negotiations with [the Palestinian Authority] belong to an outdated paradigm... the Palestinian Authority President's meetings with [Israeli Premier] Olmert mean nothing to Israel except proving to the U.S. that the peace process still exists."

Walles